LETTERS FROM A FRENCH HOSPITAL

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LETTERS FROM A FRENCH HOSPITAL



Letters from a French Hospital



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PREFACE

I PUBLISH these letters, not for the sake of their literary merit—though that, I think, is considerable—but because their vivid pictures of Hospital life ought to interest home readers in what is being done by brave Englishwomen to help our gallant Allies.

The niece is now about to join another Hospital nearer the French front, though I doubt her strength for continuance of that hard work. I have tried to persuade her to come home for a rest. But no! She says "the call" is too strong. She "sticks it." Hence this small tribute from

THE UNCLE.

October 1916.

I AM not gay as some are gay.
I grope,
Blind seeking hands reaching towards unseen day,
Not without hope.

I am not sad as some are sad,
I know
Hid by gross flesh, with which my soul is clad,
My loved ones go.

I am not bowed as some are bowed
With grief,
For my dear witnesses within the cloud,
Send me relief.

I am not strong as some are strong,
I bear
Through bitter years that are too long, too long,
My heavy share.

I am not brave as some are brave,
Sore spent
I pray, clasped hands bereft of all life gave,
Make me content.

LETTERS FROM A FRENCH HOSPITAL

Hôpital Temporaire,
Somewhere in France.
31 *July* 1915.

My dear Uncle,

I could not write sooner to give you my address because I did not know it. My only orders were to report at —— and be told there where I was to proceed to further. I reached —— yesterday morning and here at night. To-day I was presented to the Médecin-chef and started in at once. There are two English ladies to each division and otherwise only orderlies, and the need is great.

Of course, what I am doing is against my conviction. I think only fully-trained nurses should help the wounded. But the fact remains that most fully-trained nurses cannot afford to work for nothing and support themselves, and unless V.A.D. people will come, the poor wounded are left to the orderlies. And I am, or any other outsider is, better than that. And oh! the poor, poor fellows lying

in dirt and discomfort! I shall not write often while I am here because I can already see such piles of things that want doing. And there are not enough bandages, not enough dressings, not enough sheets and towels, not enough disinfectants, not enough anything. Thank goodness, I got accustomed to a certain amount of making shift at the Clinica. It was really a better training than an English hospital with everything tip-top. And Dr. —— said I could feel assured that I knew enough to be a valuable help, and every batch of wounded will make me know more. Anyway, "animo y adelante."

When I first offered for this work I wrote to you about it. I hope my letter reached you. It seems so long since I had any news of you, but I trust you are quite well and not too overworked.

This letter wants shaking together, but I am too tired for style. I reached here last night (Friday, 30th) at 9.10 p.m., and had not allowed myself sleeping-car because I do not yet know what unforeseen expenses await me. So to-night I shall sleep like the dead.

I do not know anybody here, and I feel lonely, lonely, lonely.

4 *September* 1915.

Many thanks for yours of 23 August, also for one earlier in the month. I hope you have received the answer by now, as I believe all my letters have reached their destination sooner or later, though sometimes considerably delayed.

The other day one of my wounded, who draws rather well, made portraits of the men in the nearest beds on postcards. Well, I was washing him, and he said, "Mademoiselle Mees, is Madame your mother still alive?" I said "Yes." Then he asked me to make time to sit near him for a quarter hour so that he could draw me on a card, and I was to send it to her to show her how much I was appreciated. He said it was the only thing he could do for me, and "elle sera si contente."

They are all so charming to me. As the wards are so big it really is very little that I can do for each, and they make so much of it. They are not used to much care, and the little I give them is repaid a hundredfold by their gratitude. Not one ever disputes a word I say; sometimes the orderlies fetch me because "so and so" won't do what he is told, and I wonder whatever I shall do if he does not listen to me, but I only have to appear and all is well. The other day I was fetched be-

cause a man operated that morning would get up. He was a great big Breton and I should have been nowhere if he chose to resist. When I got near someone said "Tiens, voila Mlle. Mees!" Poor Fèvre looked round and said, "J'étais en train de me remettre," and got back as meek as a lamb. As soon as they are up and convalescent they try to help me with the cleaning, etc.

We are rather slack just now, and I am trying to get everything cleaned ready for when we get another batch of wounded.

Could you get some anti-typhoid serum sent to me, enough for the two inoculations? We could not get it in Spain, so I have never been done, and all they had here is used up, and it really is necessary. Please!

26 *September* 1915.

So many thanks for sending me the serum. I really did feel like tempting Providence, being the only person not inoculated. The stuff has just arrived, and my Major will do me to-morrow morning. Would you mind telling the shop (by 'phone would be quickest) to repeat the order? You see, the way it is done is, 500 bacilli to-morrow, and ten days later 1,000. But they have only sent one bottle of 1,000. It is rather silly because even their

own directions allow for two injections, making a total of 1,500 bacilli. Also, a bottle once broken open cannot be used again.

I was very pleased with your letter announcing that our circle was unharmed by Zepps, and that you are keeping well in spite of varied strain. It was stupid of me to write in a depressed strain—forget it. I try never to allow myself to be depressed, only it is sometimes "plus fort que moi."

Things have lightened. A lady has come to the 2nd Division, so I am relieved. It was high time, as I already felt like a half-sucked lozenge. Now I can once more give all my attention to my own beloved 3rd Division. I have much to be thankful for when I realize my own health. This time last year I was as near death as I could get, and now I have done the very hardest work for two months, after two months of fairly hard work in Spain. And I am quite chirpy still. Thanks be to Sir B. M. who did it, to the C—s, and the M—s who worried me into going to Leeds, and to you whose generosity made it possible.

I forget whether I told you how lucky I am otherwise. I wrote B. W. a long account of here and the makeshifts we go in for and other deficiencies which militate against the prompt recovery of our wounded. B. sent the letter to her

father, who has never seen me at a stile without trying to help me over, and I got a line from him to wire him at once a list of my most pressing needs. These are now already en route for here, and he paid £10 into my bank to help me in supplying milk, eggs, beef tea, etc., for my poor men. Truly my knots are very quickly unravelled.

My health is good, but not robust. The work is hard and wearing, but so much needed. And I try to take care of myself. After lunch I lie flat on my back before beginning the afternoon's work. I go to bed early, 9.30 at latest, because we begin work at 7.30, having already breakfasted. And I pay extra to get a glass of milk at night, which always suited me. And there is nothing else I can do. Also, "their need is greater than mine."

7 October 1915.

So many thanks for letter and serum. I cannot write properly, as I am dog-tired. We had a convoy of wounded, 266 on Friday night and 70 on Saturday. They came straight from the trenches into the wards after a two days' journey, thick with Champagne mud and lice and blood. It is trying to cut off clothes and dress wounds and clean bodies by candle-light. For two nights and

three days we did not take our clothes off or our hairpins out. Things are better now, but I do forty-one dressings every day and work from 7.30 a.m. till 8 p.m., with only one break for lunch. If it went on like this always I could not stand it, but as the wounds get better I shall work less.

22 October 1915.

Your nice letter just to hand. I love hearing from you and being assured that the Zepps have not got you.

As to my breaking down, no, nobody need worry. I think I can stand it all right, accidents apart, of course. And so long as I can hold on I feel I ought. It is not to praise myself that I say it, but we are no longer allowed to have trained paid nurses here, and of the partially trained, I am the best. Partly because I have had an exceptional chance with my doctor friends in Spain, and partly because I have a funny kind of brain that goes for essentials. The result is that my Major takes the worst cases for my division and then does not look at them for days together. I keep a slate hung up on which I mark the number of the bed where there is a wound I mistrust or some change that I do not understand, and those are the only cases he

looks at. I am thankful to say that all my wounds are clearing up at last and the men doing well. All except one who has typhoid, and I have him in a room apart. Things are made unnecessarily hard for us here. There is a typhoid ward, and it would have lightened my labours to send my man there, but by the time typhoid symptoms appeared, they had filled up the said ward with the lice-covered clothes, so I had to keep him, and most of the time I am too busy to do everything myself, and must trust to the obedience of an ignorant orderly to do the rest. Also, instead of our men's clothes being changed before they came to their ward, they were sent up as they were, and we were not allowed to take the clothes out of the ward until each man's possessions had been "numérottés." It took the corporal two days to do my division, and by that time my nice clean wards, cleaned under incredibly difficult circumstances, were, and are still, crawling. I am not exaggerating, I spend my life trying to oust them, hateful, disgusting. I wear an anti-vermin belt myself, and finding that they got on to my feet and ankles, I cut up a belt and wrapped pieces round my ankles and knees under my stockings. That settled them. If ever they get past my ankles, they perish in the second trenches at my knees. Of course it spoils

the appearance of my ankles, and in a hospital where all the administration is masculine, it requires some courage to know that one looks like a very fat woman whose calves have slipped. Since I wrote you last we have had no fresh wounded, consequently life is easier. Yesterday I got off at 4 p.m. and had a walk—the first in three weeks—Sundays not excepted. Consequently, to-day I am once more full of beans. In other ways also things are better now, some fresh ladies came out and I have been allowed two, one who had already served two months in another division and one quite new. For that I thank the Major, as I think he had a fight for it. One lady helps me in the salle de pansements, and the other does ward work, so there is a hope of once more being straight and clean. Even now we are only twelve to this huge hospital; I know several who would and could come and help, but a military hospital is hedged in by red tape entanglements, and until a new order comes, we are not allowed more. However, our médecin-chef is convinced of the need for more, so perhaps he may succeed in getting permission soon. Until then "animo y adelante."

My health is wonderful. I am tired always, but I have nearly forgotten what bad pain is like. Some day when I have time I shall write and tell Sir

B. M. what a splendid result his operation had. I had one bad day after the second inoculation, and too many wounds to dress to permit of going to bed. But that is over now and I feel safer. Also just now so many who came wrecks are making good recoveries that I can't help feeling just a little bit happy. I will write regularly unless we get another rush. If I don't write you will know that we are getting a succession of bad cases.

23 November 1915.

You must think me very rude not to answer your kind letter of 3rd inst., but I do hate to write when things are coloured with disaster, because I know my letters under such conditions are clouded with hopelessness, no matter how hard I try to tint them with rose.

The disaster was a small one, but painful. It began with a violent toothache; I could not see anything amiss with the tooth so tried to endure it. At last it was too much so I asked for the dentist and found he came from —— every Sunday. Waited till Sunday, when he pronounced it abscess and drilled a hole right through. It was an agony, and by night I was nearly mad. Late at night our Pharmacien tried to extract the tooth, broke it, had

three tries for the root and would have tried again only I could bear no more. I heard "pauvre petite mademoiselle" and "quelle pitié," and I also heard a continuous moaning noise in the room, and curiously enough I heard it for some time before I realized that it was myself making it. Then, for the honour of England, I stopped. It was a dreadful night and would have been worse but for the kindness of my Major, who worked for a long time trying to deaden the pain with applications of cocaine and other things. Then he wrote to a dentist in —— and a man here who has a car motored me in so that I should get over it comfortably. I had gas and felt nothing, but on the way home my jaw hurt right back into my throat, and by the time I got here I had a temperature of 103.4°. It ended in "une angine," which is the acute tonsilitis called in England hospital throat, and for a few days I was pretty low. Now I am better, and very grateful for all the kindness shown me. You never know how good people can be until you need help.

The work here goes on rather successfully. You very kindly offer me things I want, and I would jump at the offer, only I do not think it right to take more than necessary from England. Who knows what we may need before we finish? I

really can manage nicely. At first it was almost impossible, but Mr. G. sent me £10 to help feed up my worst cases, and he and T. W. put up between them £10 worth of instruments and waterproof sheeting and other necessaries, and we began to see daylight. And now Mrs. M. sends me once a month from her War Hospital Supply Depot a large case of dressings, splints, etc., and on receipt of each case I let her know my most pressing needs for the next case. And now I am promised help from America by those two Yale lads I found stranded on my journey through Germany last year, and brought out to England with me. But if I ever do need some indispensable I shall write and ask you with gratitude and confidence.

With regard to my own needs, yes, I do want things. I should so like to tonic myself before a worse thing befall me. Could you have some Iron Jelloids (No. 1 strength) and some Phosferine tablets sent me? Once before I was ordered them turn about, a fortnight each, and they did me good. Also I do want a wedding present for that nice little French girl who used to help me when I was all alone. She is marrying an Infantry Captain on 21 December. I can get nothing here. I thought one of those watch-clocks that fold flat in a three-flap case, so that they can open up and stand. It

is difficult to explain, but I think a shop would know. Or a small travelling jewel case. Or anything suitable. I should like to give between 21*s* and 30*s*. for it, and I like something plain and good. Do you mind? I should be so grateful, and please, I want to pay for it myself.

Do you think I could give my Major a Christmas present? He has been so awfully good to me, not only in this last affair, but when I had a poisoned finger, and when I was inoculated, and he backs me up in the hospital whenever I need support And no other division's doctor takes half that trouble. Also he is married, so no one could think anything. If you agree that I can, please get a very nice glass hypodermic syringe in a case, or something of that kind. These army doctors are badly paid and badly provided, and yet our relations are such that I could not ask for his bill. If you think fit and get a syringe, please say "All glass."

And forgive me for jumping at your enquiry about my needs.

29 *November* 1915.

You know you offered to help my work, and at the moment I did not need help. Now I do, and it is a joy to know that you will, as usual, smooth away my difficulties. The case is this—last year

the hospital gave a tamasha for the wounded at Christmas; this year it is forbidden. It was said that if the Infirmières liked to give their divisions a little treat, well and good, but the military authorities must do nothing. So the Englishwomen met and discussed and decided to give a tea, each in her own division, and a little present to each man. All are to do alike so that no division feel neglected. Now, I can manage the food and drink, but I cannot get as far as presents. You see, I have my money all mapped out with very little margin, because all the time we feed up people with milk, and eggs, and fruit, and soup. We cannot cure men of awful wounds, operations, shock, etc., unless they are properly fed, and here the feeding consists of two meals a day, at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., and poor at that. Of course, Mr. G's money helps a lot with the extras, and makes it just possible for me to keep pace with the needs of my flock. This new extra is just too much.

Such of us as are rich are going to —— to hunt the shops; the poor are writing to friends in England.

Of course, I know that what I ask is not an absolute necessity for the men, but if you knew their poverty, if you could see them hour after hour with nothing to do, turning over old, old newspapers, dejected and silent, only brightening when "une

Anglaise" passes, racking her brains to think of something cheerful to say! And the orderlies have told them of last Christmas, so they are all asking whether there will be any fête; it is the one topic.

Therefore, what I beg is a consignment of little gifts, penknives, pocket books, letter cases, soldiers' purses, braces, writing blocks, pencils, anything suitable, and above all, let them look English. I have already some coloured handkerchiefs, and three pipes, but forty-seven men I have nothing for. And a few extra would be handy because I have some vacant beds which might get filled up by then. I thought perhaps you might have some kind-hearted typist or some one who would not mind choosing things, 10½*d.* things perhaps, or 6*d.*, at Benetfink's, or any of those cheap City places. Or if you really cannot, please give me the wherewithal to go to —— and get the things; I can get twenty-four hours' leave for the purpose. But things from England would be much better, besides everything here is so dear, and I should have to spend a night in —— (all additional expense).

Things reach me via The Military F. W. D. Office, Southampton Docks, or by parcel post, in which case you put, "Pour les blessés" on the parcel. And please no tobacco or cigarettes because we have to pay a tremendous duty.

And forgive me for worrying you for something in every letter.

This is an awful scrawl, but I am writing on my knee beside a poor man who has just been amputated above the knee, and he may wake from the anaesthetic any minute. And there is so very little time to Christmas.

12 *December* 1915.

Your two kind letters have given me great satisfaction and encouragement, as no doubt they were intended to do. It is so good of you to attend to the gifts for Jeanne B. and Major F., and even to pay for them for me, but what am I to say about your last kindness? I think the parcel of gifts for my poor patients would have been joy enough for me without a large gift for myself. I am rich indeed. I read out the first part of your letter to my comrades at lunch, because naturally the Christmas treat for our divisions has been a problem to us in this out-of-the-way spot, so I wanted them to know how my difficulties were solved. Well, there was a perfect chorus, "Oh, what an uncle to have!" "It isn't fair!" "Wish I had someone to write to!" etc. I purred.

Alice's list sounds most promising, I am glad she had a hand in my men's treat. My thanks to

her for the trouble she has taken. I will be careful to take the prices off. I am so looking forward to Christmas Day; we told the wards we should have a tea and they *are* pleased! In my division some of the not-so-ill are going to sing and some are learning up things out of the comic papers to recite. And they have no inkling of the little presents in store for them, that will be quite a surprise. I shall do up each gift in paper with the name on it because they love to be known to us by name. In the hospital they are numbered according to their beds, and I find it easier to remember them by their wounds, especially as my Major never knows them by anything else, they are "celui de l'épaule fracturée," "l'amputé de la jambe," "l'ostéite du tibia," etc., but once I was told that they spoke with approval of me because to me each man was "un être et pas un numéro," so now I learn each name as he comes in, and I am usually just getting the name thoroughly connected with the wound and the face when the man is considered well enough to move on to a convalescent hospital.

My parcel of watch, syringe, and tonics has not come yet; I hope it is safe. I have only lost one thing that I know of since I came here, and that was a parcel of two dozen packs of playing cards that B. W. sent from Harrods.

I sometimes wish I could make governments and politicians spend a month or two working with me. Can anything justify so much blighting of young lives and crippling of young bodies? I believe professional nurses are hardened to it, but I don't think I ever shall be. When they bring me a man all broken up something in the back of my mind will insist on showing me what he was probably like three days ago, and my throat gets so tight I can hardly give the necessary orders to the brancardiers.

Sometimes the clearing stations make such mistakes. One night I had a man brought up with a bandaged head and face and every sign of utter collapse, and yet on his label (each "blessé" is labelled like a parcel) he had only "plaie superficielle de la tête." Do you know, he had half his face blown away, eye and all, and a jagged wound in his thigh with smashed pelvis. He is gradually returning to health and his remaining eye is unaffected, but it has been a struggle. For days I fed him through one of my smallest drainage tubes, and his only sign of life was a gleam of recognition in his one eye. One of the first days he was able to speak I asked him if he would like me to write to anyone, he said yes, his wife, so I wrote how much better he was, and then he dictated a few words of his

own, and I said, "Now shall I put your name"? He said, "Mettez, 'Ton petit mari, Augustin.' Mademoiselle, croyez-vous qu'elle m'aimera comme autrefois? J'étais un beau garcon." That confirmed old maid (myself) replied: "Si j'avais un mari et il me revenait blessé, je l'aimerais plus que jamais, et la plupart des femmes pense ainsi." He said, "Merci. Vous me rendez le courage."

Our latest excitement is that there is a rumour that my Major is to be given the position of médecin-chef at another military hospital near here. The excitement is increased by the fact that he has stated his intention of applying for "Mademoiselle B." to be transferred to the other hospital as "infirmière major." Of course, I cannot help feeling proud of having my five months' work so appreciated, but I do not feel keen on leaving my dear 3rd Division, and I hope things will be so arranged that I can gracefully decline.

Ever so many thanks for my feeling of wealth and prosperity, and the pleasure awaiting me at Christmas.

I really am quite well again.

We enjoyed your hospital stories. This is the best I had heard before:

"A Highlander was dying in a hospital ward

somewhere in France, and he begged and begged to be allowed to hear his native music once more. So a piper was brought, and the Highlander was so greatly cheered that he took a turn for the better and recovered. But all the rest of the ward died."

19 *December* 1915.

I think the enclosed must refer to your parcel to me, as J.'s wedding present has never arrived. Will you find out whether the parcel was posted in W. St. Office, and if so, fill in the enclosed with your name and address? I do not think it can be anything else, as I do not expect anything from anyone.

The things for the men are not here yet, but I live in hope, and if the gifts are late, I can give them at New Year as "étrennes," instead of with the tea.

If the parcel in question is the one which contains watch, syringe, and medicine, could you send me the watch-clock by registered letter post? You see, Jeanne will be married Tuesday, and although we agreed that she should not postpone the ceremony till my gift came, I should like to give it her as soon after as possible.

No more now, I have such a head to-night, and when I get one I can hardly see straight.

All my gratitude and esteem.

29 *December* 1915.

I am overwhelmed by the lengths to which your kind thought for me takes you. I am very sorry you should have had so much trouble over my wants, but I cannot be altogether sorry about the delay, since it will eventually leave me in happy possession of a watch-clock for myself. As to Jeanne's present, my Major has to go to —— to-morrow, and he will get me a watch-clock, that is to say, several to choose from, and the gestionnaire of the hospital will take back the remainder when he goes next week. So all is well.

It was very disappointing not to have the Christmas presents, but in the end I worried through. Several of my comrades had more than they needed, so I bought their leavings. Unfortunately, they, of course, sold the presents they did not like, so my men's things did not seem quite so nice as the other divisions, but they are such dears and you would have thought I had given them each something most precious. I shall like to have your fifty gifts to keep by me and give a little souvenir

to men when they are discharged. I often give a little thing to those who have been with me some time, and they so love having something English.

To-day I am rather sad and lonely, two of my "anciens" have been discharged; they were here already when I came, and were hitherto never quite well enough to be evacuated. Since they have been up and about they have waited on me hand and foot, and were always discovering some new thing they could take off my hands. Also they were such nice fellows, and one especially was full of "esprit." He is an infantry corporal, and in peace time was chief cashier in one of the large champagne houses. He has one month's leave and then back to the trenches, and my Major, who likes him immensely, says it is murder, because there is one spot in his right lung which has never properly healed. The Major says he will never get over the wound quite, and a wet night or two will be enough to kill him. Yesterday he was called rather hastily to the "conseil de convalescence," and when he got back he lay down on his bed and I could hear his breathing all down the ward. Ten minutes later he was back in the "salle de pansements" to cut dressings for me. To-day the évacués left at 7 a.m., but when I went on duty I found everything ready for me, instruments sterilized, hot water on the

boil, disinfectants all prepared, etc., and the "blessés" told me the corporal had been getting things ready since before six. You will realize how hardened I am getting when I tell you that I got through the day's work without poisoning every wound with my tears.

Oh, the things I have seen in this war are burnt into my brain, the hideous suffering, the men sent back limping and with legs permanently too short or joints stiff. Men discharged from hospital with half-healed wounds, badly fed in their depots and sleeping on scanty straw spread on stone floors. Mon dieu! And those who do not suffer in their persons do not care in the least. They shrug and say, "Que voulez-vous, c'est la guerre!" And as for helping, not a sou. I do not care if this letter is censored here or not, it is time someone told them the truth. Do you know, when men arrive with their clothes shot and torn to pieces, we have nothing to give them when they can leave their beds unless we buy or kind friends in England send us old clothes. We felt sure the French gave nothing because they did not know the need, and so we persuaded our médecin-chef to put an advertisement in the local paper—we only asked for old clothes. For days we paid hopeful visits to the "bureau des entrées." Do you know the result? Not

a parcel, not one single rag. And the people here are by no means shabbily dressed. My division is fairly well-off now for clothes, because Mrs. J. M. has helped me greatly, as also the Windsor Hotel Work Party and the Kensington Place. But there was a time when those getting better refused to stay in bed for want of clothes, and walked about in a single shirt flapping in the draught. Why none of them died of pneumonia I don't know. When my first six dressing gowns arrived there was great rejoicing. I put one by the bed of one man who had permission to get up, and he seized it and patted and smoothed it, saying, "Madame, Madame, quel bonheur d'aller au cabinet!" But you will be getting tired of my letter if I tell you any more about my wounded.

Your letter is dated 24th and you say nothing about the storm, so I hope it did not affect you in any way. I read of it in the "Times."

I like to be remembered at your Christmas dinner.

Must go to bed. Do you know, I bought a bed with 25 francs of your money. Not that I hadn't one before, but it was like the map of Switzerland with the Matterhorn in the middle.

21 *January* 1916.

At last the parcel has arrived containing Jeanne's belated watch-clock, M. F.'s syringe, and my tonics. I thank you very much. Part of the delay was caused by the parcel being sealed; it caused much fuss.

The watch looks far more clockish than the little one I got at ——, so I shall show it to Jeanne, and let her have whichever she likes best. I shall be happy with either, both being presents from you.

I have started on a tonic right away, but I do not think anyone need fear a breakdown for me. I have worked for years without health, and now I work with it, and the difference is tremendous. And I do not think I could endure to leave off with the knowledge of all the misery here unalleviated. There is plenty of misery everywhere, but I have been put into this patch of it, so "j'y suis, j'y reste." Just now I have as many ill as wounded, seven consumptions, eleven typhoids, one rheumatic fever, and lots with acute bronchitis.

24 *January* 1916.

Thank you for yours of 19th—it crossed mine in acknowledgment of the first parcel. No doubt the

other things will turn up in time, though as yet I have no notice of them.

I hope your daily round and common task are not furnishing more than you need. I do not forget that you have worked right on without a holiday since 1913. And I am afraid I add to your labours by my constant need of a letter. But indeed your letters mean so much to me, both when they come, and afterwards when I can say casually, "My uncle writes this or that." I think only a woman who had been utterly alone could ever know what it feels like—"the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Jeanne liked the watch you chose best, so now I have the other little one, and thank you kindly. I don't think I told you about her wedding. Five of us English went and got much confused about whether you stood, sat, or knelt. We were put so far up the church that we could not copy the others without getting a stiff neck. Afterwards the pair went to the Sacristy and stood there while everyone filed past to shake hands and make a suitable compliment. Me she seized and kissed on both cheeks. As I filed out I passed two of the other Englishwomen filing in, and one of them said: "Do we have to kiss her too?" And I said: "No, it's him *you* have to kiss." How was I to

know that the man just behind them was a relative of Jeanne's, who speaks English perfectly? And now all—know what I said. Luckily the French consider that sort of thing "de l'esprit" instead of merely vulgar. Jeanne looked sweet in a short white satin frock, and smiled so happily as she went out. We lined the aisle for her to pass through, what the French call "faire la haie," and one part of the hedge was quite imposing, consisting of five English nurses in uniform and white veils alternating with the officers of the *administration*, and further down such of the wounded soldiers as were sufficiently convalescent to attend.

I am very well, thank you. The last draft are getting to the stage of doing well, and I always feel better when the division is recovering.

5 *February* 1916.

I thank you for yours of 1st, by which I see that our circle is safe and untouched by Zepps. Sometimes I almost pray for the war to end, no matter who wins, it is all I can do to prevent myself. As to praying, except for the lives of those I love, I am kept from doing that by a lively recollection of "Kriegsgottesdienst" in Frankfurt. Prayer there was fervent enough, Heaven knows, and no doubt

the same occurs on our side. The Board of Providence must be rather hampered in its activities, if it listens. You know those little papers you get with the announcement of the next general meeting; you are supposed to sign the paper appointing Mr. So-and-so your proxy. If there is a stamped envelope I sign mine because my conscience does not like me to lick the stamp off for other purposes. But if there is no stamp, I never sign it because I know they will do what they choose without bothering about me. Well, Providence is just like that.

However, the "raison d'être" of this letter is not to write nonsense, but to tell you that Shoolbred's parcel has at last given a sign of life. I have just received a notice from the "bureau des arrivages internationaux" at Paris demanding that I should pay sixteen francs for eight cigarette lighters addressed to me. I have written back asking whether I may forfeit the "briquets" and have the rest of the parcel. I will now post the letter and see what happens next. It appears that matches are a government monopoly, and therefore "protected" in this way. Anyhow, I am very glad the presents are not lost.

My division has been evacuated until I have only twenty-nine men. I had intended to take it

easy a little as soon as I had got the beds disinfected. The médecin-chef leaves it to me to arrange the work as I think best and take any time off that I like, so I had looked forward to an afternoon or two off. As luck would have it a telegram has just come telling us to prepare for 204 wounded. They are expected at 3 a.m. That means that we tumble up by 2.30 and put cocoa on the stove and hot water ready to clean the men. Then they probably won't arrive till 5 or 6; meanwhile, we hang round and shiver and have whispered conversations with any poor dear who may be awake. This sounds like a grumble, but really I am happy, as much so as I could be while the world is full of hatred and suffering. You know a woman cannot be really unhappy while she is adored by never less than twenty-five men at a time! I never thought there could be such gratitude in the world as I get for my small services. The other day I had a man amputated nearly up at the thigh. Of course, he might easily have a haemorrhage after that; so in the night I stole down the ward to raise the clothes and see whether there was any leakage. I went very quietly to awaken no one. But the beds are very near together to accommodate as many as possible, and as I turned away satisfied, I was suddenly

seized by the man in the next bed: "Mademoiselle, chère petite mademoiselle, vous pensez à nous quand vous devez vous reposer. Que les Anglaises sont gentilles, jamais je ne les oublierai!" and I crept away with my heart warm and my hands a mass of kisses. You see, Uncle, I could not be better paid, and it even gives me pleasure to be known everywhere as "la petite mademoiselle."

Must go to sleep. I hope you do not mind my letters being untidy. I write them in bed so as to rest all I can.

Will write about the parcel when it comes.

18 *February* 1916.

At last I have my "blessés'" Christmas presents, and they are so nice. Fascinating pocket-books with writing requisites, knives, purses, pipes, and cigarette lighters. I took one pocket-book to a poor lad of twenty-two whose spine is injured. He is not in my division, but I got to know him when his division was left without a nurse once, and I had to do all the dressings there as well as my own. He is now in a plaster jacket and kept flat on his back without even a pillow. To-day I snatched a moment to go and see him and he showed me his pocket-book, quite changed since

yesterday, positively bursting with things, his family's photographs, my photograph with my "blessés," etc., and what pleased him more than anything was that he had sprinkled drops of scent on it! He is like a child with a single toy. Poor, poor young boy, fancy being strong and active and suddenly brought to this by a bullet. And only twenty-two. Strangely enough, his name is Elliot, but he only knows of an aunt who married an Englishman. I have invented ancestors for him, and to make them seem more desirable, I put them on the Border and gave them all sorts of raids to take part in. You see, lying flat like that, he can do nothing and it tires him to read, so I give him Tales of his Ancestors in little half-hours after "déjeuner" or in the evening. I plagiarize most of the History of Scotland for him. To-day I told him of one Elliot de l'Œil de Feu who drove the Scots' cattle into the Devil's Beef Tub to hide them until the seeking Scots had passed. You should have seen his eyes sparkle when the Scots were riding round the Tub in the mist and one bull gave the whole show away by bellowing. I had to leave off there, luckily, because I have not the slightest notion how to get the mythical Elliot out of that mess. At least, not as top dog, and he would not be much of an ancestor to have unless

he did. No doubt I shall think of something before next time. Make use of cattle's goring propensities, probably. Elliot has never been much of a reader, so my rough-and-ready stories, with their obvious plots, castles, dungeons, villains, and all the paraphernalia of melodrama, are quite new to him.

Please tell Alice she chose awfully well, just the sort of things they like. One would think she had been amongst them and knew their pathetic affection for the few treasures in their pockets.

Whenever the "blessés" are evacuated from here, their great idea is to be photographed with their nurses, as a souvenir. The radiograph man does it and charges 30 centimes a card. As we are often having men discharged as cured or nearly so, I am often being photographed. I enclose one of the latest—will you please give it to Alice. These things are sad souvenirs to me. Most of these men will be "là-bas" so very soon. They always call the front "là-bas." It is one of the trials of my present life that the sooner I get their sufferings relieved, the nearer they are to "là-bas."

Do you remember that joke in "Punch" called "Toujours la Politesse," about the "fumier" instead of "fumeur"? Well, I think this is almost as good. My comrade, who is in charge of the 2nd Division,

had the brilliant idea of writing a list of her orderlies' duties for each day. On Tuesday she wrote: "Nettoyer tous les sots" (she meant seaux).

I must go to bed. Very many thanks for the many joyful moments of presentation in store for me.

Tell Alice the branch Manager of the Société Générale here is going to give me a packet of new "sous," so that I can put one for luck in each purse.

24 *February* 1916.

Thank you for yours. I am very, very sorry for your loss of your old friend. It does seem hard at a time like this, when one loses so many mobilized friends, to lose immobilized as well.

Your letter must have crossed one of mine telling you of the safe arrival of the parcel. You are quite right, I know I write too long letters, it almost amounts to a disease! I will not "embêter" you so much in future, but it is such a temptation. If my work meant a lot of writing, as it used to do, I should not inflict long letters on my friends, but you see I never write here.

I am in bed to-day. I was getting tired, and orders came to send away as many men as we can and make room for 300 new cases. So the Major

made me take a day lying down, and he, poor chap, is doing all my dressings meanwhile. To-morrow I may get up, but not go near the division, and the next day the convoy arrives.

Six inches of snow again to-day, lying.

6 *March* 1916.

Thank you for a nice long letter of 25 February with news of G. and the baby. I like to hear of anything so peaceful as babies and baritones. You have never told me where G. is, but it is evidently somewhere where nobody clamours about "one man, one job."

You seem to be getting your snow late this year, I don't wonder everyone has a cold. I have found out here that if you are never warm you do not get a chill either. Obviously you have to be warm first in order to chill. The snow is still falling in great swirls, and last night the fallen snow froze hard; to-day it was quite difficult to get across the slippery courtyard to the "pharmacie" for necessaries. I am not quite so cold as I was in December and January, because I have now a woolly jacket thing that Aunt M. sent me to wear under my uniform, and I and my woolly jacket are never far apart.

Yes, the wolves, as you call them, would have

their francs, 16; they wrote that I could refuse the parcel if I liked, in which case it would go as a gift to the minister of war, but that I could not refuse a part of the "contenu." I did not fancy the Minister putting his banknotes in my blessés' pocket books, nor his sous in their purses, so I paid up. And it was well worth it for the pleasure I have had over the presentation of a few of the things. One I sent to a dear young fellow who had lost his right leg, and has degeneration of the bone. They are always taking off a little more, and the trouble always begins again higher up. He is the son of a farmer in the invaded country (Maubeuge), so he cannot communicate with his people and feels very lonely. They are not allowed to stay more than three months in one hospital except in very exceptional cases, so he has had his last operation in ——. My Major does not think he will live very long, and I hate to think of him alone and suffering. So I cram in a weekly letter to him, and a little parcel as often as I can get anything to send. I enclose his last letter, not to worry you to read it all, but because of the message for you.[1] I had told him that you sent me the things. I have marked the message.

[1] Unfortunately mislaid.

22 *March* 1916.

I thank you for your letter of 14th inst. Do you know, even those of my comrades here who have mothers at home to back them up, are not more supported by kindness than I. As for going without, I am forgetting what it is like to go without anything but spare time. I am writing to Alice this very night to ask for the stockings, and thank you very much indeed. This place is impossible for shopping, and nobody wears woollen stockings; they use "chaufferettes" when sitting down, but I have no time for that. You would think I ought to keep warm working up and down my long division, but I don't. I have feet like icebergs, and my head on fire towards evening. My Major thinks my maddening headaches are largely due to want of circulation, and I do think they have been worse since I have worn only the cotton stockings I can get here.

This week we, like you, have had a more bearable temperature, but the cold is still quite severe enough. I hope your Zepp. weather has broken up. We read strange things about hydroplanes attacking the Kent coast. I hope this is unfounded rumour. Verdun is too tragic for words, the wounded seem to know little of what really hap-

pened, but they are one and all shocked at the immeasurable slaughter of Germans. If only it encourages the German Military politicians to cry, "Halt! enough!"

When people crow about some exploit pulled off with only one casualty, I feel as if I must go and put my arms round the one poor little casualty and cheer him up, as if the single sacrifice were being undervalued in the general triumph. It must be so much easier to live if you can feel with the majority. I am feeling it very much since these last convoys; all my comrades have been so bucked by it all, but I cannot even be as cheerful as usual. Do you know what the wounded say? "Les pauvres Boches, nous marchions sur leurs corps gémissants. Nous leur écrasions les figures sous nos pieds." I never for a moment wanted the Boches to win, but I just can't want them to be killed. And when even the French pitied them, it must have been awful. I have not even wanted to make a joke lately.

Apropos of which, I made such a "faux pas" last week. We were lunching and the médecin-chef burnt his mouth; one of our majors asked laughingly what first-aid we could suggest, and someone said, "drink cold water," and I, of course, added my suggestion. Only it came in the midst

of an unfortunate hush, "Ouvrir la bouche comme un poisson, et respirer vivement," and the dreadful part is that his mouth is so like a fish, but I really was not thinking of that at the moment. I meant anybody's mouth.

Je vous serre cordialement la main en vous remerciant du fond du cœur.

4 *April* 1916.

Behold me far more comfy than usual with a pair of fine cashmere stockings on. Four beautiful pairs arrived this morning with your letter, and yesterday's afternoon post brought one dozen linen handkerchiefs and a warm wool spencer. I am "comblée de bienfaits," and really I could hardly say which made me feel warmer, the stockings I began to wear at once or the handkies which I did not! You cannot imagine what it feels like to have my needs not only cared for, but even anticipated. I shall keep those handkerchiefs for best because I do not usually go in for such fine ones, my life being of that kind which induces handkerchiefs to go astray. I should have been so glad of one of those hankies the day before yesterday, because I just had to weep a little and my hank was cotton, and I daresay you don't know, but cotton is par-

ticularly non-absorbent of tears. One of my "blessés" of the 1 January convoy was discharged, and he was a dear lad who lost his parents quite young and only has a brother. When he came to say good-bye he broke down and cried and said he had never been so happy since his mother died, and to have been with me was like "retrouver ma famille." So I had to cry, too, because it takes someone harder than I not to. But I remembered to be careful about it and not too evident in the wards, just dabbed at my eyes and took a far-reaching sniff.

It is astonishing how many lonely poilus there are. I once had a "blessé" named Leon Mazue, very badly wounded. It took us fourteen weeks to cure him. He was back in the trenches during the bitter cold of this winter, and in one of his letters he told me that his tunic which had been ruined when he was wounded first had not been replaced, and he was very cold with only his capote over his shirt. So I sent him a sort of cardigan, cotton unfortunately, as I could not find wool, and a kind of flannel under-vest which I cut out and a French friend sewed. Well, he wrote and thanked me and I thought no more about it, until I got another letter saying he had something to confess. The men in his compagnie were talking about all the

unmarried men without parents having "une marraine de guerre," except they said "ce pauvre Mazue, qui n'a personne," and he said, "Mais si, j'ai une marraine," and they, never having heard of it, disbelieved. So he said, "C'est la dame anglaise qui m'a envoyé les effets." And he asked me not to be "contrariée," he had not liked them to know he was quite alone, and he had not been able to marry yet, because he was too young to have made enough money.

The blessés tell me the Zepps have returned to London. May they have spared all those whom I esteem. So selfish does the war make us. Or rather, me.

I thank you for your offer of a paper, but one of my comrades has "The Times," and another "Punch," so I see them when I have time. If you could sometimes send me one of your weekly picture papers when you have done with it, I should welcome it, as my "blessés" love to look at them and try to read the words under the pictures. You see, all but the very stupid or very bucolic like to get me to teach them a little English, and there is a good deal of fun over the pleasant rivalry between my English pupils in neighbouring beds B. W. sometimes sends us a "Tatler"—it is a great success.

I must sleep now.

Very many thanks for all my comforts. I will write again as soon as the others and the marking-ink turn up.

14 *April* 1916.

Behold two parcels and a letter. Many, many thanks. The golden brown scarf is perfectly sweet, a delightful surprise, the second Spencer I had been led to expect by your last letter. Spencers are such a comfort. The marking-ink to hand, such a good idea of Alice's to put in tape. I hope the war will be over before I finish the ink, three bottles being a goodly supply. The last two pairs of stockings are still missing, but I have known letters to be longer on the way, so there is hope. And I like to be still expecting it. For all my years, a parcel arriving puts me in a pleasurable state of flutter.

We are having frequent convoys just now, of course, but I am really wonderfully well. And I do get so encouraged. I have just had a box from old Mr. G.—a particularly well-loved friend of mine—containing 4 lb. of Ceylon cocoa, 2 lb. Ceylon tea, and 2 lb. Ceylon chocolate for my "blessés." You will no doubt guess he has properties in Ceylon.

He says there is twice the quantity waiting to be despatched when this has reached. You know, most of my fellow-workers here are better off than I, and some are very rich, but *not one* has my good fortune in the way of uncles and friends. They get lots of things for their divisions, but mostly large orders from Harrods, etc., not things charmingly personal like mine.

What do you think of the enclosed card? It came in an envelope, and where the black cotton is there was a tiny enamel Croix de Guise sewn on. I have often had letters of thanks from wives or mothers, but from a brother never before. Do you wonder that I often need handkerchiefs? I have a great collection of rings made of the aluminium tops of shells, drawings done in the trenches, bullet case pencil holders, etc. But fancy a perfectly strange brother spending his microscopic pay on buying me a Croix de Guise! And the lad who was here was never so very ill, so I had not given him any more care than the others.

Must stop. So many thanks for my comforts, and to Alice for her thoughtful "ideas."

18 *April* 1916.

Thank you. All your parcels have now reached me. I think the post deserves some praise for its trusty work in these dislocated days.

Our last convoy is now seven days old, therefore the work is all arranged and going well, and I am not so tired as last week. And, on the whole, the wounds are not quite so bad as we have had in other convoys. These men had the good fortune to fall into skilful hands for their first dressing. It makes all the difference.

I think I have told you about Mr. ——, our barrister friend, who lived at the hotel and took our "blessés" out in turn; well, he has left to-day for Havre. His brother, who is forty-one years old and has wife and family, had attested, and is now called up. Mr. ——, who is much older and unmarried, has gone home to see if he can replace the brother. We miss him already, and there is nothing now for the "blessés" to look forward to when they are better. Last night Mr. —— asked two of my comrades and me to get off early and go with him to —— and have a farewell dinner. We made a great rush and got off by 6.30. I borrowed a comrade's fur-lined coat and put on everything I could think of, and luckily the night was still. We had a lovely

run to ——, with the snow-clad mountains all round, and the river, very swollen, roaring and tumbling far below the road. Mr. —— had ordered a very nice little dinner, and we had a serviette each and dined off a tablecloth; it felt like peace and, combined with being in civil clothes, quite went to my head. So I pretended to be a lady, and did some fairly good pleasant conversation. But the others would not play up, and laughed so much that I am afraid I must have overdone it. We dined on a glass-covered balcony overhanging the river, and drank to all our hopes. Then we had a dreamlike drive home in the moonlight and crept in and to bed. And that chapter of our life here is closed, and may he go with God.

The weather is perceptibly warmer; the snow still lies pretty low on the mountains, but not actually in ——. I hope we shall not need to see another winter here. There are all sorts of prophecies, and I wish I might believe the speediest.

1 *May* 1916.

So many thanks for the Illustrateds. This week's is, I think, addressed by Alice. I missed your handwriting, and very much hope you are too busy, and not ill. All is well with me, but I am

busy, as my comrade has rather knocked up and my Major is on leave for four days. It has suddenly become warmer and the snow is nearly all melted. I feel twice the woman I was last week; with me warmth and good courage are almost synonymous. (Looks wrong, somehow.) Not much news from anywhere, but 4lb. of tea from Mr. G. for my "blessés." Bless him. I have discharged five men cured this week, five men sent away, to what? It is anxious work.

10 *May* 1916.

Thank you, I am quite well, and all the better for the ever-increasing warmth. Just now I have no case causing me great anxiety, even my worst being out of the wood, so until the next convoy comes I am free from the most burdensome worries. If we don't get a telegram to-night announcing a convoy I shall take to-morrow afternoon off and go out into the sun for a "lizard bath." I have not had a day off since long before Mr. —— left, when he motored me over to —— for a night. My comrade can often have a day or an afternoon, but she is not head of the division. The honour of being that makes you so completely responsible for the health and wounds of the

"blessed" and for the organization of the division that things have to be very straight indeed before I dare to absent myself. However, I am not grumbling, because I have the hearts of all my "blessed" and the respect and goodwill of the administration, and those three intangible benefits are to me beyond price.

Now that we are in smooth waters for a few days I have taught some of my men how to make raffia baskets and the wards look like an "atelier." But it is worth anything to see how interested they are. My wards are sure that the war will be over on 3 July. The latest arrivals say that in the trenches "des canards" are being repeated on both sides pointing to a conclusion in July. But one lad says it will be on the 16th because the bell fell from the church tower in his village on 16 April, and the last time it fell was in 1870 and three months later peace was declared. So "animo y adelante."

Don't tire yourself with answering my every scrawl. A line from time to time, especially after a Zepp. raid, will keep me from worrying.

17 *May* 1916.

We are not so very busy, in spite of Verdun. My major says the deaths far outnumber the

wounded, and that is why we are not getting any convoys. I have a whole salle of thirty-one beds empty. My comrade has gone to —— to see the dentist, so I am alone for a day or two. I am glad that no convoys are coming, because I have to do the housekeeping for us all, and it makes me very tired. I have often wanted to tell you how we live. We do not sleep in the hospital, but in a house at the gates. I have morning coffee and supper there, but "déjeuner" I get in the hospital. If we have any case ill enough to need us at night, we do not get home at all. That is not really often, because wounds are not like illness, except in grave operations, like amputations. Now about our house—we used to live in another one that I did not like, and we paid through the nose for it. I used to look at this one as I passed in and out of the gates and it always charmed me. One Sunday when I had a few hours off I got the keys and came in, and I cannot describe what I felt like. Outside I left the Hospital and the war and our strenuous life and many difficulties, and I stepped straight into old France of the stately times when people's lives were longer and there was time to learn to be gracious and graceful. Hushing my steps to a whisper I crept over parquet floors and rested in Louis XIV chairs; all round were price-

less old gilt mirrors, clocks which looked as if they had lost heart and died when their owners died, old miniatures, snuffboxes, great iron dogs on the hearths, in fact, everything that charmed. After a time I found out that the place had been left to two young men, now at the front. More delay, and I found out that they would let me rent it for 100 francs a month! Think of it, old France and a peaceful atmosphere for 100 francs. To say nothing of all the rooms on the ground floor opening on to a fascinating old cobbled terrace commanding a tangled old sleeping-beauty garden. And to crown all, I found that it is known as "La Maison de ——" So I felt that it was meant for me, and when I had to become housekeeper, after some negotiating, I steered my comrades into the old house, and nobody has ever regretted it. We have been on the brink of meeting the ghost of a Spaniard and many other ghosts times out of number, but we never quite see them. I have been told that there is something strange about the small rent charged, but I have not experienced anything. Dividing the rent amongst us brings it to 20 francs a month for each large room and 10 francs for each small room, and that includes hall, kitchen. dining, and sitting room, and terrace and garden. How I should enjoy the place if it were peace!

The following are some verses written during our first week at this house, to embody our feelings:

La Maison de

A strange old house, with corners everywhere,
And deep recesses in the two-foot walls;
All ups and downs, and creakings on the stair,
And half-heard murmurs in the shadowed halls.

In one quaint room, designed for someone's queen,
Some memory of an age-old love still stands:
Above the alcove, on a painted screen,
Two little faded Cupids, clasping hands.

Who was the ancient Spaniard?
Whom did he love here, centuries ago?
Is that his tread along the terrace wet,
Or but the footsteps of soft, melting snow?

I sit and dream with all my lamps alight.
This chair, perchance, was once the Spaniard's own,
Perchance he sits beside me through the night,
Else why this sense that I am not alone?

That doorway in an angle of the room
Might be a harmless cupboard, but is not;
Beyond, stone steps lead downward into gloom,
The Spaniard may have hid there, hid—from what?

In vain at night I double lock my door,
In the old alcove seek my modern bed—
Surely I heard that breathing sound before,
There, as I turned my head!

I start and listen oft, but not in fear,
In these old rooms but gentle souls remain,
Or such as come to dream of joys known here—
Not bitter visitors to once-lived pain.

For, resting here, I feel my strength increase,
Towards happiness my thoughts unbidden roam.
'Tis good to feel an influence of peace
Clings lovingly to this our war-time home.

I hope I have produced the creepy feeling we all have at times, when we are not too tired to feel anything. With many thanks for your valued letters.

16 *June* 1916.

I cannot imagine what you must think of me for not answering your very nice long letter of 29 May. But perhaps you have not noticed the delay, and if that is so, it is silly of me to mention it. I thank you very much for having ordered that book for me. I see that there was some reason for the ill-success of the shop here.

You talk to me about too long strain, but I

think you do not realize that you have remained in harness for a far longer stretch. However, you were bowled over by a real illness, and I have collapsed under a series of moral blows. It seems so weak-minded to go down under intangible troubles, but at the best of times I have a heart that is cracked and chipped, and only stuck together with seccotine, so it is apt to be brittle. And everything came together.

First my Major had to go, and another is appointed in his place. Now my Major and I have never been extraordinarily chummy as some of my English comrades try to be with their majors. I "don't hold" with that sort of thing. But I upheld him and his methods everywhere in public, and he upheld me; all our disagreeing was done in private. Consequently, our division was one of great harmony. N.B. it was the only harmonious division in the hospital.

Secondly, our little C. went down with the "Invincible." You know I live with the H. at N. He was the youngest of the three sons, just eighteen. I can't write about it, I am afraid of looking like suet pudding to-morrow.

Thirdly, in this Hospital the First Division belongs to the chief surgeon. It is a horrid division. In it the Straits of Dover flow wide and deep be-

tween nurses and doctor, between French and English, and even between nurses and wounded. The infirmière-major, a dear little English lady, took a month's leave. During her absence a letter arrived from some English doctor offering his services here. The chief surgeon saw in it a hideous plot to remove him, and a deadly insult to the French. He demanded that his nurse should be forbidden to return. He said she was no doubt at the bottom of it, and he knew that she often criticized him. The médecin-chef tried to calm him, and at the same time keep Miss ——, the poor nurse. He agreed that Miss —— should no longer blight the chief surgeon's landscape, but wished to put her elsewhere in the hospital and said so. The chief surgeon, a great power in the land, said, on one condition. The médecin-chef asked what condition, and the big man said, "Que vous me donnez la petite Mademoiselle B. comme infirmière major." It was Sunday afternoon and I was writing the week's observations on every case when the sergeant of the guard appeared to request my presence in the bureau and I went cheerfully down, and then—well, I said no, "jamais de la vie." You see, I dislike the chief surgeon. He is harsh, and I have choked down tears and indignation at the sight of needless harshness often, so often.

Also I do not care to fall in with his wishes after his insulting distrust of my English comrade. Also I do not want to succeed where she has failed. Also my soul is given to my own division. Then the médecin-chef talked to me for a long time, he is too clever for me. He made me see that it was for Miss ——, and that we should just change places, which would be easily arranged as my Major had left, and the other did not know anyone yet, and Miss ——'s feelings would be spared the humiliation of dismissal. So I gave in, and thanks to our English self-control, he never knew the bitterness of it. To make it easier for me he gave me a fortnight's leave to begin as soon as my new Major was "au courant" with all the cases, and I was to come back to the 1st. Thus a few days went by and I was harrowed all the time. The very next morning the Major said he would send one man, who is nearly well, to a convalescent hospital, and the man begged and prayed to be left to finish here because he did not want to be in any hands but mine, and the Major gave him a great smack and said, "Eh bien, tais-toi. Tu resteras avec elle." And I knew that I was forsaking him. And everything in the division seemed to reach out hands towards me. You see, all the little improvements in this poverty-stricken place have been the result of

loving plans and loving waiting. For instance, the men used only to have empty condensed milk-tins to drink out of, the sharp edges cut their lips, and they hated me to wash them because then their drink tasted of tin. Now my division has seventy-five little blue enamel mugs, and only I know that they represent the love of three not at all rich friends. The neat dark blankets which now replace the original rags on each bed—oh well, why continue? I am sure you will understand how hard it all was. Added to all that, my comrades seemed to dislike me suddenly, all except two. Because I was the one chosen. We all dislike the 1st and the surgeon, but I believe they would have liked to be chosen.

And then Miss —— returned, and learning a little more than the médecin-chef wanted her to know, gave in her resignation. He tried to persuade her, but she would not listen. And then I flew down and said that since she was not staying I would not take the 1st. The médecin-chef refused to take what he calls my defiance, and says he will speak to me again when I have rested and "have the air less tired." In the meantime he has had me into the bureau nearly every day to talk to me like a father, and I have got to dread the appearance of the sergeant in my division. He has tried me on every

tack, and sheers off every point made by me. "I must sacrifice myself for the blessés." I reply that I do that in my own division, and to descend to the first is to sacrifice myself for Monsieur —— which I do not propose to do after his treatment of my comrade. "No one would believe that a little lady who appeared to be all gentillesse and douceur could have la tête si dure." I reply that it is my "cœur déjà monté contre Monsieur ——." Then he lectures on military discipline, and that I must learn to obey orders like a Jesuite, without question. It has been so hard to bear because he always treats me with so much kindness, and we are all fond of the old man, and his disapproval is mingled with so much subtle flattery and appreciation of what I have done. He says that my division used to be nicknamed, "L'Ile Déserte," and that under me it became the best-run division in the place without anyone having noticed the change being wrought. He said that therefore I was "la personne indiquée pour mettre de l'ordre à la première division." And I am so unhappy that French people have stopped me to remark that my face is half the size it was, and now my new major is doing all my dressings, and I have retired to bed. And I am going to spend a few days at the Chateau de —— next week. They are coming for me in their car, and there is a

loggia in the park where I am to lie all day. No doubt it will put me right again, but my works all go on strike when I am upset mentally. And oh! I hope they will leave me in peace when I return! The médecin-chef says I do not realize that no infirmière has ever been so honoured as to have the chief surgeon asking for her services. I do not know the French translation of "honour be blowed." I only know that Mr. —— (the médecin-chef) wrote and asked Miss —— what she knew of the English doctor's offer, and she replied "nothing, did not even know his name," and M. —— refused to believe her and demanded her dismissal "quand même."

Oh dear and oh dear! I feel better now I have written, and it is awfully selfish to worry you. Anyhow, I am glad to say I gave them a fright by looking iller and iller, and perhaps they will be afraid to upset me so when I return. I wish I could see clearly out of it all, but besides loyalty to Miss ——, I think it would be a bad move to submit to ——, because he is so cruel, so cruel, and I am sure in one of his bad moods I should lose my discretion and go for him. And my tongue when roused is of a most far-reaching fluency. I would chuck it all and go to England, only I have never known myself so frightfully needed.

A former comrade, Mrs. ——, took my watch

over. Would you please have it put right, the hands seem to catch, because the watch goes on but the time stops, several hours at a time. It is a radium figured and handed watch that a Spaniard gave me to serve me in the war. And I am rather lost without it.

I was greatly bucked by what you said about my prose and my verse. But it seems funny that you should never have known I versified. I cannot remember when I did not. Must have written miles of it. I used to cut off the borders of "The Pioneer Mail" for writing on when I was very small, and then Mother found that out and was angry. So I got the habit of taking small sheets of paper of uniform size, and that has given my verses the tendency to be always of a certain length, just what a childish writing could conveniently put on the two sides.

I shall be on duty again 29 June; in the meantime I shall probably write a good deal.

Pardon this frightfully selfish letter. It has done me lots of good.

25 *June* 1916.

I am afraid I wrote you rather a desperate letter last time. I hasten to add this so that you may

know that my mental equilibrium is restored. It really had suffered too much of a strain lately.

I have not had "a great time" here because I was too utterly done up and stipulated for quiet. So I have spent my days lying in an open loggia in the park and my nights in a perfect dream of a bed. And on Tuesday my friends will motor me back, so that I can have Wednesday to settle down before beginning work again on Thursday.

This is a most gorgeous place, statues, marble staircases, expensive hideous furniture, electric light, looking-glasses everywhere, the sort of place that shows things up; you know what I mean—I am deeply conscious of out-of-date civil clothes, tired wrinkled face, and hands ruined by disinfectants. However, "c'est la guerre, et à la guerre comme à la guerre." The chief thing is that I am well again, and that was what these kind people wanted. When the war is over I shall not fly to England in the first rush; I shall rest a few days and then go to —— and get some clothes and be manicured.

When I get back I shall have to report myself to Papa B.

There is something rather big that I want very much, but I own it looks greedy. I got some washing material here for my uniform, and it has washed

in patches of different colour so dreadfully that I cannot wear either of the frocks now. Would you allow Alice to order me the real thing at Gorringe's in Buckingham Palace Road? It is called "Palace Gingham," shade No. 20, 1*s.* 0½*d.* per yard. Please I want fourteen yards for the two frocks. If Gorringe will send in two parcels, seven yards in each, it will come all right by parcels post; they have already done so for one of my comrades who wrote to her mother for some. I shall be so grateful if I can have two frocks, I hate the two that are all patchy, and as we have to be having our frocks ceaselessly in the wash my last year's ones are very tired. There is a refugee woman who will make them quite nicely, and I do like to look neat and fresh.

4 *July* 1916.

I thank you for your long kind letter of 21st ult.

I don't think I ought to leave off while able to go on. I am really quite well again and am not afraid of any serious breakdown because no matter how low I get, a few days' lying down with a pencil and paper cures me. You see, I have now absolutely nothing the matter with me, only the weakness consequent on continued ill-health.

Things have quieted down here. I am back in

the third division. Mr. —— says "Pour le moment," but I say, "J'y suis, j'y reste."

Are you more hopeful? We are. These last few days men have shaken my hand till it is painful. Is it possible that we are nearing the end?

I wonder whether Mrs. —— has given Alice my watch. I hope you will be in when she calls as I should love her to meet you. She is a dear little lady who lost her husband, a Ghurka officer, in the war, and went all to pieces. She worked here to try and forget, but she is not really strong enough for this place. I have missed her very much since she left.

We are evacuating every man possible, as a large convoy is expected. I hope I do not get any eye cases and nobody dying.

14 *July* 1916.

Your letter of 4th gave me great pleasure.

I was interested to hear of Mrs. ——.

If I find this too much for me and come home, will you be able to get me a job? In the War Office, or something high-class? If I thought I could still help in the war I could go home more readily. Not that I am giving in, but I might find it just too much for me again, and I could not

bear to go home and not help. If you do not see your way to getting me a berth, just say "no," and if I leave here I will set about getting one myself. But I have got rather out of touch with everything English since I went to —— in March 1914. And I can do lots of things that offices like: you would be surprised. I can write decently in English, Spanish, French, and German. I can type, draw up consular reports, summarize blue books, keep the boss in a good temper, and all sorts of useful things. Anyhow, I will hold my hand on this plough as long as I can. And the news is better every day.

My grateful thanks for the watch and the gingham.

18 *July* 1916.

Both your letter and my watch safely to hand. My best thanks. I was so glad to get my watch because it has a second hand for counting pulses and radium hands and figures so that I can see it at night. I see you had a new leather bracelet put to it; I conclude the fault was that the old one did not prevent the thin metal case from getting pressed on to the works. I thank you very much. I wonder whether even the King gets his wants supplied more completely and promptly than I.

It is not surprising that you are "greatly occupied—chiefly with other people's business."

In your kind letter of 12th you mention three frock pieces having been sent. Did I ever have three frocks at a time before? I think not. I shall indeed be "tirée à quatre épingles." I will write as soon as they come.

Never mind how short your letters are when you are busy. I just love getting them. When one comes my soul magnifies the Lord so loud that everyone hears it. The result is that when the vaguemestre hands round the letters my comrades say things like "Two for you, —— and one's a nice one," your handwriting being known.

No more to-night, as there is not much life in this old dog just now, but there will be in the morning.

Yours with grateful thanks.

26 *July* 1916.

A word to tell you the last hard stroke. You know I told you that C. was drowned in H.M.S. "Invincible." Now I learn that M., the next brother, was killed at G—— position, S. of Arras in the advance of 16 July. He was at Cambridge when the war began. We called him M.

Poor, poor Mrs. H. Ours will no longer be the happiest home in London, there is now only L. left, somewhere N. of Arras.

If we were all certain to die quite soon ourselves it would not matter, but think of all the long years without the dear lads to whom my lonely heart went out so long ago now, went out and never returned empty. Why God takes those bright young lives and leaves me, whom He might have for the asking, I cannot think.

It is no use trying to cheer up, to remember only how happy they were. I can't remember anything nice. My thoughts of little C. are always a gray sea and his floating face, and M. I see face downwards in the mud.

It is a shame to trouble you, but could you write poor Mrs. H. a word in her sorrow? I know you don't know her, but if you could say a word to let her know how much I loved them, I think it would comfort her a little, and you always put things so perfectly. Don't if you would rather not. The address is ——

30 *July* 1916.

Your letter of 25th safely to hand, as also two envelopes containing two little silk wrist-bags, which

are perfectly charming. I have posted the pale-blue one for little Marguerite's birthday, and the pale-green shall wait until the tiny daughter of the Procureur de la Republique has her fête. Alice does succeed in her shopping for me, she has added greatly to my pleasure and comfort since I asked her to help me. I wish she could see the number of times I am rapturously greeted by little children in this town whenever I go out. It is most uplifting.

Cannot you spend every week-end in Brighton? I am sure it would be better than sleeping-draughts. I do not "hold" with them, I think they are so liable to bring on word forgetfulness, which is very worrying. I am afraid working hard for other people's business has tired you to the point of sleeplessness, and I feel humble when I remember how much I have worried you in the last year or two. Even two days ago I wrote you my misery about the boys when I might have kept it to myself.

You are awfully good to suggest advertising for me, but I do not really require it. I was just wondering about it, that was all. I shall stay here as long as I can, and if I have to give it up, I have no doubt a little feeling round in London would find me something. Only, as we are on the subject,

may I tell you that one of my dreams is to be librarian, or assistant librarian, or any old thing, at the Royal Geographical Society. So if ever you hear anything which might help me, please pass it on for my use. You see, I feel sure I could do the job well; I have had to do so much research work there for ——, and already know my way fairly well among the books there. I used to be a happy woman whenever my work took me to Lowther Lodge, and one afternoon I was ensconced there in a cosy armchair, writing for dear life on the very table where Mungo Parke once wrote, when an elderly man became rather irritated because one of the assistants could not help to find something about the Atrato and the once-proposed alternative to the Panama Canal. So I ventured to suggest the books containing that information, and he was an astonished man. From that to the thought how much better *I* should be in that job was a mere step! Just fancy having it as my business to do the things which I do anyhow as a pleasure!

The frocks have not arrived yet, but parcels post takes about three weeks. My Spanish watch is keeping perfect time now, I like having it back because the men like to see it coming up the ward in the dark like a glow-worm.

If I had known that you thought like that of them, I could have written you yards and yards more ("God forbid"). I only held my hand out of mercy for you! But in case you should do anything of the kind, I will write you one or two to tell a little about the exceeding charmingness of the French "poilu." It will take my evening thoughts off my dear lost friends.

The first man I should like to tell you about is "Nobody-loves-me." His real name is B——, a "cultivateur" of about thirty-five years old. He came to us straight from the Front, wounded in the thigh, and in such a state after his three days' journey that he had to be operated on at once in our "salle de pansements," and his nerve was quite shattered, so he fought and shrieked and was afraid of every movement we made. He kept on sobbing, "C'est incroyable. Tout le monde vous fait mal," that is why my comrade nicknamed him "Nobody-loves-me." For a few days he needed constant care and cried when his wounds were dressed; then he began to trust us and cheer up. By the time he was cured no one could have been nicer and we all liked him. About that time I began to teach the "blessés" to make raffia baskets as a pastime; "Nobody-loves-me" went one better and began making a tiny chair out of bits of packing case,

with a raffia seat. His only tools were an old knife and a bit of glass, and a great wish to present me with something "très chic." But in the next bed to him lay young Chrétien, a mischievous lad who loved to tease, and whenever he could get hold of it, he hid "Nobody-loves-me's" little chair. At last "Nobody-loves-me" lost his temper and said, "Eh bien, tu ne veux pas que je finisse, je ne finirai pas," and stamped on the chair. I knew nothing of all this, and going round the ward admiring the men's little efforts, I happened to say how proud I should be of B's little chair. I saw him turn his head away and look miserable, and I wondered. Afterwards one of the others told me what had happened. Well, the next day I missed "Nobody-loves-me" all day, and at last I asked the ward where he was. They answered in a perfect chorus: "Il se cache dans le cabinet." "Il refait la petite chaise." "Il travaille comme un fou." When it was finished B. crept up behind me where I was teaching one "blessé" a little English, and placed it on the bed in front of me, blushing with shyness and pride. I shall keep it as long as I live; unless our house catches fire.

"Nobody-loves-me" has been discharged now, and his going was the most piteous thing of all. Our men are often much moved when the parting

comes, and tears are frequent, but poor B. cried off and on for the whole twenty-fours between the time his papers were signed and the hour of departure. At intervals during the day he tried to make me speeches and broke down in them all. At last he caught me in the isolation ward and said he must confess something. It was an awful thing, but did I know that when he first reached —— he had said that he did not want to be "entre les griffes des sales Anglaises." He did not know how he could have said it, and it had made him miserable to think that he could. All this in the most heart-broken sobs. I said that people said all sorts of things when they were in pain, and that he had been such a help to us since he got better, and that we were all "désolées" at having to lose him. He cheered up after that, and next time I met him in the ward he began in a firm voice, "Si jamais vous aurez le plaisir de venir à Grenoble" I was to go to his house, and if he himself had died "là-bas," at that he collapsed again. Poor dear thing! I don't weep much myself, but I get very near it. I am becoming an adept in sort of stretching my eyes and taking a far-reaching sniff.

Must turn off tap or you will be tired.

"Je vous serre cordialement la main."

6 *August* 1916.

A parcel containing nice cool blue Gingham safely to hand. I thank you very much for it. No doubt the other two lengths will arrive in due time Considering all things I do not think we can complain much about the post in war time.

Our horrid old Hop has had no end of an excitement. You know our need in this country is the continuous supply of efficient men for the Front, so the Hospital Orderlies have been suppressed, that is to say, "emptied" into the infantry. Of course it has not mattered to us, because the convalescent "blessés" are always only too pleased to help us. But the administration is not so readily served, and last week a circular order was read out requiring all the "blessés" to "rendre service" and authorizing the sergeant of the guard to call upon them. I don't know whether you have had experience of the exceeding unreasonableness of matters military and the heavy machinery that gets going after the tiniest push. Anyhow, I have not steered my division for a whole year among the quicksands of the 17th Army Corps orders for nothing, and I began to look ahead and see the rocks we might split upon. So I compiled a list of my "blessés" divided into four classes: (1) incapable at present; (2) in-

capable of hand work; (3) incapable of leg work; (4) never likely to be capable. Then, with a glance round to get a clear coast, I slipped down to the sergeant's room, gave up the list and promised a revised list every week. Result, men with leg wounds are called upon to peel potatoes, etc., men with arm wounds go errands or carry orders, and there is no friction. But a dreadful thing happened in another division—a wounded hand was called upon to peel potatoes, no excuse listened to, and so he refused indignantly, rudely too, I believe. Anyhow, the "gestionnaire" gave him eight days' prison, and he would not go, so a guard from the 59th Infantry fetched him with fixed bayonets. And the whole thing might have been prevented if only the fatigue party had been judiciously selected. The English nurses discussed the affair indignantly at supper while I sat and thanked God that my division was not as other divisions. I probably looked horribly smug, because someone remarked bitterly that of course my division had its usual luck. The poor culprit is ill enough to require bringing here every day for his wound to be treated. The armed guard brings him and takes him back, and there is a general atmosphere of smouldering wrath whenever he passes.

I do not approve of making martyrs or "ex-

amples" of poor broken soldiers in hospital, and it is not necessary. As proof that it is not, look at us nurses. Nobody ever supports our authority, and we never need to ask for assistance. I personally never even speak severely, the wish to please their "infirmière" is so great. I will give you an instance. One of my convalescents brought in a young green woodpecker he had caught and it shrieked and shrieked. When I went to see what the noise was, R. wanted me to accept the bird, and I said I would set it free if it were mine because it seemed a shame to spoil its happy life. R. said he would set it free to-morrow, they would just keep it one evening to amuse them in the ward. I did not press him further because I always remember something I once read about St. Augustine's way of encouraging his disciples. "He tried, not to make men good, he tried to make them better." Later I was in their ward again and missed the shrieking bird. "Où est la pique?" I said, and R. replied that he had taken it out and set it free where he found it. "J'ai vu dans les yeux de Mademoiselle que ça lui faisait de la peine," he said.

After all this boasting something dreadful will probably happen to me to-morrow. I think I would like to prepare a cosy little dug-out for my talent,

where it could nestle in a clean serviette until the judgement day. The parable considers this course to be laziness, but it is not, it is really funk.

All my best thanks for the frock.

12 *August* 1916.

I thank you for yours of 4th.

The other two blue frocks have come, and I do feel set up. No one neater than I in the Hospital! I enclose our latest photograph of my division. Self in old frock.

I believe my difficulty about not forsaking my men here will be solved for me. It is some time since we had a convoy, and the voice goes round that perhaps there will be no more. The voice also says that the top floor of the Hospital may be closed, and all the Blessed put on the ground and first floors; that would mean closing the Third division. Oh, I hope they will, then I could leave with a clear conscience. I could not allow myself to abandon any poor dears there, but if the poor dears gradually became fewer and at last the division closed, it would not ill-become even one whose first ancestor was a " block of ragstone grit " to retire. Anyhow, I shall, and I can't help feel-

ing cowardly when I note how I long for that contingency.

Now that we are fewer I get nice little spells of rest. This afternoon I have left the work, what there is of it, to my French comrade, and I am lying on our cobbled terrace. It does me good. Tomorrow I shall probably get time to go to the chapel; I love to hear the soldiers sing the "Salut Jeanne D'arc." It is fascinatingly quaint and one-sided, *e.g.*, the verse: "Sainte Vierge de Domremy, *Il nous faut* Metz et la Lorraine." Naïve, isn't it?

Apropos of Jeanne D'arc, I think she must have been what the French call "un homme manqué." Sometimes at lunch at the Hospital I get a place opposite a picture representing Jeanne in front of the drawbridge, being seized by the two English soldiers. She is looking at them with haughty contempt, as who should say "Unhand me, varlets," but . . . she has a decided moustache.

We have been given some Annamites as orderlies. Poor little yellow things! They don't understand French, and they are not even known by names, only by numbers. My two are cent-soixante-trois and cinquante-six. It does seem inhuman. I shall find out their names, if I can. I tried with one. I pointed to a blessed, and said "Roux," to another and said, "Busson," then to

him, and he said "Orc," but I don't know whether that was his name, or "yes," or what! I wonder whether they will learn French, or ourselves learn Tonquinese? Anyhow, a match is "Dzim," and tobacco is "Turlao," so that is a beginning. People are settling down into treating them properly now, but at first I thought the Mites were going to be failures because no one could manage them. Some treated them like slaves and others made too much of them. The first night they arrived, worn out and miserable, they were set to work at once moving heavy iron beds across the patio, and the sergeant who gave the orders bellowed at them, furious because they could not understand. The Mites stood miserably before him, some looking frightened, others meeting his wrath with a disarming smile. I said to one of the officers of the administration that is was very hard to make them work at once and that I did not understand how they could be shouted at like that, considering there was no conscription in Annam and they were, therefore, "volontaires." He said that they were practically slaves at any time, so it was easy to make them engage as volontaires. I exclaimed, "Slaves!" And he shrugged his shoulders and said: "What will you, if *we* had not made them slaves, the English or the Germans would!" And he went

on to tell me how the recruits were obtained in Tonquin. The natives are always obliged to answer the call of the drum, therefore, when soldiers were needed, the drum was beaten inside the barrack yard. As soon as every Annamite within earshot is inside, the gates are closed, "et après ça, il n'y a plus de sortie, et ils se sont engagés, volontaires." Simplicity itself!

My own two Mites work very well, are quick and gentle, and seem quite content now. But, though I says it as shouldn't, everybody prefers being in my division! A little while ago we prepared a little concert for our blessed; some sing quite well, and most of them recite. I wrote out the programme and a "blessé" called out each item We had all the administration in to listen, and one provided a song. In the middle there was a small delay and then one of my blessed, who was not on the programme, got up and asked permission to read a paper. It was called "Un blessé à ses infirmières." He began by saying that it was difficult for a poilu like him to address ladies like us, but he would at least try to thank us for himself and in the name of his comrades. Then followed a long list of "Merci." And the sweetest of all was, "Merci pour avoir su, malgré la difference de nationalité, créer autour de nous l'il-

lusion de la famille." Afterwards somebody said: "Oh well, of course, that was because he belonged to B.'s division." I can tell you I felt uplifted.

This is a long ramble. Must close. I am finishing on 13 August because a headache intervened.

Sans vous oublier.

22 *August* 1916.

I thank you for yours of the 16th. Will you please get the promised application form, so that I can consider it. I want to help somewhere, and in England life is so dear that I cannot afford to *give* my services, as I do here. Also, I have lived very near the margin here because there have been so many needs to supply for the men, so I must earn something soon.

I have given notice for one month hence, so I expect to leave for England at the end of September. I do it now with a clear conscience, as we hear that there will no longer be big convoys of badly wounded sent down here. One wing of the Hop. is to be given back to the youth of France. (I forget whether I told you that the building used to be a Lycée.) It gives me an opportunity of giving up a very tiring life without the guilty feeling that I shall be leaving poor dears neglected,

I have not had more than one "salle" for a long time, and am much more rested. It is quite nice to have time to know that I am alive.

The other day I had a great pleasure—I went and put my two feet into Spain. We motored to the frontier, which is not very far away. I looked longingly over into peace, but as soon as I walked in a guard sprang out of space to prevent my passage. So then I looked longingly at the guard, so untidy and familiar, just like Spain itself. A quite smart kepi on each soldier's head, and a not bad tunic. But the glory fades away through striped cotton trousers until it terminates in feet of clay thrust into rope-soled canvas "alpargatas." In Spain, when any course is decided upon, such as the formation of a company or the building of something, there is a great tamasha. The interested parties invite themselves to a banquet first; after that they have their photograph taken. And usually that finishes the project. But I love the country all the same. It means so much to me. It means the place I went to fifteen years ago, having decided that I was fated to have every hand against mine, but that I should get on in spite of it all. And there I found love, appreciation, and a home, and my defiance slipped away like a bad dream, which only leaves an occasional shudder

behind. All that makes my soul stretch out groping hands towards Spain, and when I told the Spanish sentries that we were the nurses from the military hospital come out for a holiday, and that I once had the happiness to live ten years in their beautiful "pais," and therefore now when I wanted to refresh myself I came there to look at it, they received me with joy and would have let me in with any contraband I might have wanted to smuggle.

One of the Annamites has been very ill. His sergeant doctored him, as they must be looked after by their own people. He rubbed the patient all over with a hard-boiled egg, into which a silver franc was introduced. The coin turned black with the sulphur, and the Tonkinese say the disease has now entered the coin and turned it black. They were sad because the coin was so small. One of the English ladies provided a half-crown—great joy, bigger coin, bigger cure. The Mite is certainly recovering. Faith healing, no doubt. The natural deduction is that it is the faith that counts and not the object believed in. A disquieting field for speculation.

27 *August* 1916.

The vaguemestre has brought me your registered letter containing lucre for me. It is too good of you. I could have got home without, but it will be luxurious to travel with a reserve in hand. You know I travel in France with a military pass, so I shall only pay for luggage (not included), food, hotel anywhere I may have to stop, until I get to the coast. For all comfort on my prospective journey I thank you very much.

You know I told the médecin-chef I wanted to leave in about a month. Also I wished to rest a little before leaving. Well, I have been firm about it, and to-day a lad in my division has developed scarlet fever. So how can I leave him? Anyway just for the present. I have him in the isolation ward, and there are only myself and an Annamite to do anything for him. And one case like that added to twenty-two wounded men makes the day very long. Even the disinfection of myself takes time. But I shall try to leave at the end of September, whatever happens. It would be such a rest to do office work again after this hard physical labour combined with anxiety for poilus' lives and limbs. My first step will be to agitate for someone else to take charge of my poor fever patient. It is all very

well to do everything myself now, but when he begins to peel, what then? I should give it to the whole division, no matter how careful I was.

During the last fortnight we have changed doctors again, our previous major being sent to M. This morning our new one, Major D, said that he was not trying to give me "des gants," *i.e.*, to flatter, but he had worked in other divisions and other hospitals, and he had never seen dressings better done, asepsis more carefully worked for, nor "une division qui marchait mieux." For one moment I felt much uplifted, and then I thought that perhaps Papa B. had told him to say something of the kind, as he is trying all means to make me stay. But I shall insist on leaving, especially since I am told that he said that with the present scarcity of doctors, it was more than ever "embêtant" that I was leaving, as I could have "remplacé" a doctor. Well, I "don't hold" with poor sick and broken men being left in the hands of an ignorant woman, and if I go, that is impossible. But I must stay on for the immediate present, as, besides the fever, I have an operation every day this week and two for Friday. I should not mind if it were not for the dreadful first dressings.

2 *September* 1916.

Of course you are not really "petit," only in this country when you like anyone, you call him "petit." Therefore (once more) "cher petit oncle."

My horizon has changed slightly since I wrote and I am now in a turmoil of thoughts and indecisions. You see, such a personage as myself cannot after fourteen months of service in this country put down her name as leaving the Hop. without the news circulating rather far in the medical world. Result—yesterday I received from a military hospital in the Aisne the following telegram. "Consentiriez vous venir Hôpital Temporaire —— au cas où votre comité accepterait ce changement." Of course, I do not belong to a comité, so need not ask anyone. The doctor who wired used to be in this region, though never at ——, and I knew him slightly. That commercially-minded woman, B., wired back, "Accepte, si peux être logée et nourrie." I know it is useless to ask for pay too, though the labourer is worthy of his hire. The French military machine before the war considered women nurses unnecessary, and so no provision is made for them; therefore, it would be impossible to move said machine because they happened to need one particular nurse. If the

regulations make it absolutely impossible to lodge a woman in a Military Hop. (and I believe they do) they still could manage to nourish me, and I always believe in asking for more than you need, then you are more likely to get something. Ask for one thing, and they refuse it. Ask for two, and they refuse you one. I can easily have a room somewhere, but if I have to cater for myself, it means a servant to market and cook, and that was all very well here where we were nine to share the expenses, but there I shall be one. However, if I go I shall try to collect a few others and not remain alone.

Now, I feel sure you will be thinking of the rest I ought to have had, but I do believe in following a clear call. Also my life is not so valuable as the brave young lives I might help to preserve. You will think I put a high estimate on my services, but it is that *I know* what a Military Hop. is like, and the neglect through which the poor wounded try to struggle back to health, therefore, I know the value of my services *in such a Hop*. Also "as thy day so shall thy strength be." You will be thinking I am very biblical to-day, but I think I must have had some Scotch ancestors who were satisfied with anything if once they had "got Scripture for it." Only with me all sorts of secular

tags satisfy me also. One of my most inspiring mottoes is: "Each of us fought as if hope for the garrison hung but on him." It has kept me going here often when dead-beat.

If it really becomes more than I can bear, I can always leave, and supposing I should break down it would be in the cause of poor heroic poilus of whom I cannot speak too highly. Somehow I think that a Providence does keep me up and will do so still. Though it *may* be auto-suggestion.

I am now waiting for the Major's reply, and will let you know as soon as anything is settled.

Of all the lame dogs I have ever had in my division, the most pathetic is with me now. He is an Italian from Tunis, a Zouave, with the articulation of the fingers of his left hand blown away. He is forty-three and has a wife and three children. He says his rifle went off when he was cleaning it, but the voice says that he did it on purpose, so as not to serve. Anyhow, that does not concern me; my affair is that it was thought he would have to lose his hand, and for days he suffered hideously. I am glad to say we have saved the hand, but three fingers will be permanently stiff. He cannot speak French, nor read nor write. Luckily I found out of my past life a few words of Italian and much sympathy, and the poor Zouave, D.L., follows me

like a faithful dog. I have managed to communicate with his wife in Tunis, and to-day he had a letter and a picture postcard from his little girl, Sarina. He came to me to read them, his hands trembling and such a longing in his eyes. I was dressing a grafted ear and could not leave off, and someone else offered to open his letter. He just shrank away with the precious thing, and kept his eyes fixed on me. I hope I get him finished before I leave or his trusting eyes will haunt me.

Later. Have just talked with médecin-chef. He is annoyed with me because I want to leave. It appears that I am perfection. In fact, if I believed half of what he says I should be of no practical use to anyone. I thought I would just tell you how wonderful I am in case you had not noticed.

10 *September* 1916.

Nothing doing yet. Had a letter from that Major explaining that he was having difficulty because the Hop. did not want any English. However, he begged me to remain free for a little while as he intended to get his wish sooner or later. I expect to meet some hostility if I do go to his Hop. But no doubt I shall live it down. The "Entente Cordiale" is not laid on as thick as the English papers

try to make us believe. It is pretty badly scratched off in places. I never seem to count as a foreigner; I suppose I learned young enough to make concessions to nationality, because even declared anglophobes go out of their way to be friendly to me.

In the meantime I am going to be as a cork on the waters—if the Major gets me there, well; if not, also well, perhaps even better. Sometimes I ache to see a friend.

I have begun to rest a little, because half the Hop. is closed and another division amalgamated with mine. So there were enough nurses without me and I retired. But I already feel restless as to what will become of me. When you are accustomed to putting your shoulder to the wheel it is the hardest possible thing to stand back and see whether it will turn by itself.

Everybody is so nice to me and they seem so sorry to lose me; it is quite painful at times and makes me question whether I am doing the right thing in going. Just at the last I had an instance of the extraordinary trust the Poilus have in me. I had a man operated in the back and some little "artère nourricielle" of the bone bled. You cannot ligature a blood vessel in the bone, so we plugged it as hard as we could and, naturally, I was anxious and took his pulse very often. Well, we always

need a special permission to stay at night when anyone is very ill, and I try not to ask for one if I know that the man's temperature is of the kind to make him easily frightened about himself, so I asked a very intelligent convalescent, who has helped me for a long time and learned no end, to take his pulse quite late, and if over a certain rate to call the "Médecin de garde." Next morning all was quiet and I said, "So you did not have to call the doctor." The convalescent replied that he should not have called him in any case. I, astonished, "Comment!" He, "Je serais venu à votre fenêtre pour vous appeler. C'aurait été beaucoup mieux." I said that the Hop. was locked, and he replied that he would have got over the wall. I remarked that I could not have followed him back over the wall, and he looked quite "attrapé" and said, "C'est vrai! Je n'y avais pas pensé." But you see, Uncle, the point is that I feel as if I were betraying them by leaving them when they have such an enormous trust in me. I am not wonderful and very ignorant of medicine and surgery, but I have a great sympathy with them and a longing to preserve them from suffering and harm, and they seem to feel that and it gives them courage. It is quite a common thing for men with painful dressings to beg the doctor not to touch

them, but to leave them to me. The other day a man with a grafted wound backed away from the Major and pushed him off when he wanted to take out the stitches, and cried "Je ne veux pas que ce soit vous! Je ne veux pas que ce soit vous!" If it had been an English doctor there would have been a fuss, but these men rather like leaving their work to me, so the Major just laughed and I took them all out. Luckily these men will leave soon and other men will come dribbling in who know not "la demoiselle Lucie," then I shall not feel so bad. We get no convoys now, and it is said that we no longer shall, so I really am not needed here, and it is a mistake to hang on when you question all the time whether you ought to.

We had an inspection the other day. Inspections are quite useless. The Inspector never takes any notice of evils which should be altered, but each has some hobby of his own and that is all he sees. Before he comes I ask, "Which Inspector is it?" And the answer is, "He of the toiles d'arraignée," or, "The general who dislikes curtains," then the staff takes an extra look for cobwebs, or hides the sun-curtains away for the moment. The special hobby of our Inspector was hair-cutting. He came round with a barber and took no notice of wounds, cleanliness, or anything, but wherever he found

any hair he made the barber cut a long line through the middle with a clipping machine, so that the men would be obliged to have the rest of their head cropped to match. The "blessés" all look like convicts now. One man named A., who is rather "coquet," played a trick on them. He presented himself in the "bureau du médecin-chef" with some request, and the "médecin-chef" saw wavy hair on either side of his head, and roared at him why had he not had his head cropped. A. quietly took off his kepi and revealed a shaven head, like a vulture's, from back to front, with only the two sides below the "kepi" left. Tableau.

Will write again when there are new developments.

17 *September* 1916.

I thank you for two letters, one dated 7th and one 11th, both handed me here on the same day! Our post has been very erratic lately.

At one time I had serious thoughts of refusing to go to ——, and then I got a letter from the Major, telling me that he wants me in the operating theatre, as he must have someone who can assist and be able to give anaesthetic, besides knowing how to prepare for operations. But indeed the job

does not appeal to me, not human enough. My work here was happier, because I was the mother of my division and the pivot round which everything revolved.

It is a military hospital of 1,200 beds, and I am to be lodged and nourished; there are six other nurses, French, and I can have one English comrade.

I note your query in yours of 11th, "Is it worth exchanging one hard work for another"? Well, part of this hospital is now closed, and the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Divisions merged into one. Either the head of the 2nd or I would leave, as one division does not need the nurses of three divisions. I had been here more than twice the time the other lady has, and I think she wants to stay. Now I do not, because I know that the "Médecin-chef" said he counted on me to "remplacer un Major." Well, I don't know enough. Even when we had our full complement of Majors, the men were left too much in my hands. Except the worst cases or those needing operation, men came in and went out when cured, and no one but myself had ever seen their wounds. I suffered under too much responsibility, and I am not going to let myself in for more. I do not mind working very hard, but I object to the suspicion that men

are not getting the skilled attention they should get because the Majors have an exaggerated opinion of my knowledge and skill.

I have said I must repose myself and will start next week, 26th or 27th.

My thanks to Alice for her nice letter.

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